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New York

President:	Mr. Spatafora	(Italy)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Okio
	France	Mr. Lacroix
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Indonesia	Mr. Kleib
	Panama	Mr. Suescum
	Peru	Mr. Voto-Bernales
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Nasser
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

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07-64634 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Minute of silence for the victims of the bombings in Algiers

The President: At the outset of this meeting, I would like to invite all members of the Council to observe a minute of silence for all of the victims of the bombings in Algiers on 11 December 2007. The victims of the bombings included 17 United Nations staff members and a large number of Algerian nationals and nationals of other countries. On behalf of the Council, I would like to express profound sympathy and sincere condolences to all of the victims of this devastating tragedy, to their families and to the Government of Algeria, as well as to the victims of all terrorist attacks.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Norway, Portugal and Somalia, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Dhakkar (Somalia) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Ould Abdallah to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia.

I now give him the floor.

Mr. Ould Abdallah: I would like to thank all Member States and organizations for the support I have been receiving from them in my functions, and thank them for the attention they have been giving to Somalia and the Somali people for the past 17 years.

In this connection, the United Nations and all international partner institutions and countries have made and are still making extraordinary efforts to assist Somalia under extremely harsh conditions. Many, including journalists and aid workers, have sacrificed their lives in the course of their work with little or no recognition. I would also like to thank the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). It is doing excellent work with limited resources and manpower. In addition, protecting shipments of food against high-seas piracy is new, most welcome and should be continued.

The conflict in Somalia is not, in my opinion, an African Union or a League of Arab States or an Organization of the Islamic Conference issue. It is neither a liberation struggle, nor an ethnic or religious war. It is also not just a struggle for power among the clans, as many believe. The frequently shifting allegiances between and within clans demonstrate that other factors are also responsible for the continued instability of the country.

The conflict in Somalia, which began in 1991, is a threat to peace and security. The situation is dangerous and is becoming more so each day. Somalia's youth, who make up about two thirds of the population, has only one employment opportunity — participation in a conflict that has blighted their lives. This situation has continued over the past 17 years, despite 17 agreements.

I see three possible approaches to international involvement in Somalia.

The first course of action is simply continuing the current status quo, or "business as usual". The second approach would be an organized withdrawal of the international community from Somalia, in effect accepting our inability to protect the population or to bring about a lasting peace. A third possible solution would be immediate and effective action on the political and security fronts.

The first approach is to maintain the status quo. Policies tried and implemented over the past 17 years have clearly failed to restore stability. Even worse, they may have fuelled the conflict owing to some side effects of international assistance. Aid may give the impression that it addresses the root causes of the crisis, but it does not. An increase in humanitarian assistance and improved access for agencies would be helpful but it will not put a stop to the violence. The suffering might be mitigated, but it will not be ended, as long as instability prevails. Despite millions of dollars, efforts and resources, national reconciliation continues to be elusive. The Somalis and their neighbours are frustrated by this continued war, which is generating deep resentment and cynicism.

The current military situation cannot last forever. In addition, it should not be used as an excuse for continuing business as usual. A "wait and see" attitude would only postpone the day of reckoning and would not facilitate meaningful progress towards a lasting peace. That is why we really have only two choices — either withdrawal or looking at other forms of action.

For those who believe that Somalia is one of the world's unsolvable problems, withdrawal is the only course of action. A withdrawal would provide an alternative to the costly, continued engagement in Somalia that has so far failed to bring about stability, and it may not be difficult as an operation, because there are only a very limited number of international staff in Somalia and none is based in Mogadishu.

The decision to intervene in some conflict situations while ignoring others of similar gravity would, however, have a far-reaching effect, especially in relation to public opinion, and not necessarily only in Africa. That is why I recommend the third option — taking effective action.

Taking effective action would entail new political and security initiatives. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) would have to be more active and make greater room for neutral personalities and competent members of the opposition. I take this opportunity to appeal to the Parliament to support this orientation. The objective is to form a Government that can support itself and administer the country effectively and peacefully. The Cabinet should be as representative as possible; we will never have unanimity — if we have 60 or 70 per cent in the first phase, that will be good. That Government should be capable of defending itself and maintaining good relations with all its neighbours.

With regard to the conditions for success, as I see them, the Somalia crisis is an international problem. The United Nations should launch diplomatic action to mobilize a consensus aimed at stabilizing the country. I recommend two simultaneous actions — one on the political front, the other on the security front.

On the political front, the Government should help by taking concrete steps to unite and strengthen its own ranks as well as its relationship with the opposition. The establishment of a Government of National Unity is one of the best ways to do so. More meetings between selected members of the TFG and those of the opposition should take place so as to prepare the ground for further and higher-level meetings. No large conference or freelance mediators would be welcome. This "critical path to stabilization" should include the opposition as part of the political process and should require the opposition to assume all of its responsibilities.

These discussions should preferably be held in a location close to Somalia or in one where most observers following the situation in the country are based. Once agreement on talks is reached, the discussions should be concluded within a fixed time frame. Political leaders and, especially, members of the business community and prominent Somalis of the diaspora, should be invited to contribute. I am preparing the agenda, identifying a possible list of participants and the timing for this process. I am convinced that, when left alone, Somalis are ready to join their ranks and efforts to get their country back on its feet in the next few months.

On the security front, concurrently with the political action, AMISOM needs to remain operational and its effectiveness strengthened. A new initiative should reinforce it with the deployment of additional

capacity to stabilize our country. As time is pressing, this new peace presence has become a must. In this, Saudi Arabia — and I am mentioning Saudi Arabia because, last Ramadan, they invited Somalia for a meeting — Custodian of the two holiest sites in Islam and a close neighbour, where more than 350,000 refugees are currently living, should be invited to play a leading role. Given its successful contribution to peace in the previous conflict, Saudi Arabia can help. And why should support from one or two NATO member States not be made available, if necessary?

On the practical level, the United Nations and the Somali Government should come to a swift agreement in close consultation with other concerned countries. With the Secretary-General's support, I plan to pursue this road to peace without delay. The Security Council may wish to support these two simultaneous actions. With its blessing, a group of Somalia's partners should reinforce the security capacity and deploy a peace presence. This would bring forward national reconciliation, encourage the return of the international community to Mogadishu and beyond, and reassure neighbours with respect to their security concerns. This arrangement, sanctioned by a major international conference, should mark the complete return of Somalia to the international community.

The situation in Somalia is deteriorating daily, and it is time for the international community to commit itself to a clear course of action. If the current trends of internal violence and external neglect continue, the consequences would be catastrophic for peace in the region, for the image and reputation of the United Nations, and, above all, for the long-suffering Somali civilians.

A combination of many factors — support, pressure and effective action — would help patriotic Somalis to free themselves from the scourge of war and the ghosts of the past and to unite for a strong, independent and peaceful country. I have asked for some pictures of Somalis trying to flee their country to be circulated.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould Abdallah for his comprehensive and very interesting briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Dhakkar (Somalia): On behalf of the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations, who is not currently in New York, and in my capacity as officer-in-charge of the Mission, on behalf of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, and, indeed, on behalf of all the suffering people of Somalia, I would like again to thank the Security Council and its President for giving us an opportunity to participate in this discussion.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the position taken by our colleague Ahmedou Ould Abdallah. We would like to offer him our full support in his worthy endeavours. We wholeheartedly endorse the last position he outlined, which is the only option. The only option is for the Security Council and the United Nations system to move in the right direction — not only to move in the right direction, but to do so with speed, in order to make up for lost time. It is no secret in Somalian and other circles that many Somalis — inside Somalia, in the neighbouring countries and all over the world — wonder why it is so relatively easy for the Security Council and the United Nations system to move faster and in the right direction in other places in the world where there is or has been conflict.

Basically, we endorse the idea that the Security Council should move speedily in three directions. First, existing measures should be implemented: first of all, the deployment of African Union peacekeepers. I take this opportunity to thank profusely the African Union, the Government of Uganda and the Government of Ethiopia for helping Somalia in its hour of need.

Secondly, it should be possible, in this day and age, in the twenty-first century, for the Security Council to come up with an acceptable formula to move ahead on Somalia in the right direction in the political and security sphere. It is not in the interest of the United Nations system to find ways to delay real action on Somalia.

Thirdly, of course, wherever there is conflict, there is a humanitarian disaster, and Somalia is no exception. It pains us to see Somalia for so long the subject of the worst possible headlines. The Somali people would like to move out of this situation. Those us who know us know us as proud people. Unfortunately, since the civil war, and since 1991, when the central Government collapsed, our pride has been crudely dented, but we have faith that we will come back and regain our strength.

After all, we have one language, we have one history, we have one ethnic group and we have one

religion. In many situations where I have been in my capacity as a former senior United Nations official for 23 years and as a part-time lecturer at New York University, I have been asked, "if you have all this homogeneity, what is the problem? What are you fighting about?" In many situations, I was able to explain, in two minutes rather than in two hours, what the problem was.

So my third point, talking about directions for the Security Council, was to emphasize humanitarian assistance.

I will be brief. We fully support the position taken by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. We fully endorse the need for the Security Council to move fast, and in the right direction — and now. We have faith in the United Nations system and in the Security Council. After all, part of Somalia was a United Nations Trust Territory, and the southern part gained independence with the help of the United Nations. There are many Somalis in the diaspora. There are many Somalis who have been in the United Nations system.

We all have faith in the United Nations system. We hope that five or ten years down the road we will still have faith in the United Nations system.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his briefing. We would also like to welcome the statement made by the representative of Somalia.

China has always believed that the key to the settlement of the current crisis in Somalia is for its various factions to carry out national reconciliation, engage in constructive dialogue, reach a political understanding and commit themselves to national reconstruction. We appreciate the large amount of work done by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia in that regard. We encourage it to continue its broad-based dialogue with various factions.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein as Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government. We have noticed his expressed willingness to continue dialogue with various factions in Somalia. We believe that he is able to lead the Somali people in overcoming the current difficulties. At the same time, we are worried about the health situation of President Yusuf Ahmed. We hope he will be well soon.

The efforts by the Transitional Federal Government alone are far from enough for the settlement of the Somali question. We once again call on the factions of Somalia, both inside and outside the country, to take seriously the aspiration of the Somali people for peace, to put the interest of the country and nation above everything else, not to set any preconditions for dialogue, and to work constructively for national reconciliation.

The future of Somalia as a State fundamentally depends on the efforts of the Somali people themselves; however, the assistance of the international community is also indispensable. We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ould Abdullah for his good-offices efforts since he took office. We hope that the United Nations Political Office for Somalia will be further strengthened, and we call on the international community to support Mr. Ould Abdallah and cooperate with his work.

China is deeply concerned at the security situation in Somalia. We highly appreciate the important role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) under extremely difficult conditions for the improvement of the security situation of the country. There is an urgent need to improve AMISOM's current difficult situation. It is a top priority for the international community to provide it with financial, logistical and technical support so that it can be fully deployed as soon as possible. That is essential for the stabilization of the internal security situation in Somalia, as well as for prompting Ethiopia to withdraw from Somalia.

China consistently supports the United Nations taking over for AMISOM. We understand that the Secretariat is faced with many practical difficulties in deploying a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia. However, the international community should bear in mind the urgent need of the people of Somalia. We look forward to the stepped-up efforts made by the Secretariat in formulating a contingency plan and in regular briefings of the Council in that regard.

China is seriously concerned at the humanitarian situation in Somalia. The Somali humanitarian crisis

has evolved into one of the most serious humanitarian disasters on the African continent, even exceeding the crisis in Darfur. However, compared with the great attention paid to Darfur, there has been too little input to Somalia and insufficient attention on the part of the international community. We call on the international community to donate generously to the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, and we encourage various factions in Somalia to fully cooperate with the international relief agencies and their personnel. We also hope that the humanitarian agencies respect the sovereignty of Somalia and maintain smooth communication with the Transitional Federal Government.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his briefing and also the representative of Somalia for his contribution.

Somalia remains a challenge for the Security Council and for the United Nations and the African Union as a whole. Making progress there, as today's briefing makes clear, is a long-term task and a vital one. The United Nations is uniquely placed to help address all the range of needs in Somalia: humanitarian, political, security and developmental. We warmly support Mr. Ould Abdallah's efforts to address those complex problems and to coordinate and lead an effective United Nations response. We welcome in particular his discussions with the Transitional Federal Government leadership, with the regional and international players and with a wide range of Somali stake-holders, who will have a part to play in Somalia's future.

My delegation welcomes the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator's recent visit to Somalia. Easing the humanitarian crisis should be our immediate priority. That will require continuing efforts from the United Nations, and it will take action and cooperation also by Somali actors on the ground, both Government and rebels, to ensure humanitarian access. In particular, the Transitional Federal Government should ensure that humanitarian relief can be delivered freely throughout all the areas it controls, and it should also protect those in receipt of humanitarian relief and the displaced persons who are trying to return to their homes.

On the political process, we welcome the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein. His appointment provides an opportunity to revitalize the political process. We look forward to him beginning work in earnest, once he has finalized the new Government cabinet. Full implementation of the conclusions of the National Reconciliation Congress will be crucial, in particular launching a constitutional process, establishing a clear, timetabled road map to elections at the end of the transitional period and advancing a full and meaningful dialogue with all actors in Somalia's political process: clan leaders and elders, religious groups, opposition groups, civil society and business. We will need to support the Special Representative's new initiatives to get this process moving forward.

On security, we welcome the Special Representative's new thinking. We support the proposal for a technical assessment mission to Somalia to help advance the contingency planning of the United Nations.

On the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), we believe that the United Nations should continue to support that force. The Ugandan contingent is doing a demanding job in difficult conditions. We welcome the news that Burundi hopes to deploy troops very soon, and we call on Ghana and Nigeria to honour as soon as possible their commitments to AMISOM. The United Kingdom has extended financial support to the force, including support for Burundi's deployment, and we are ready to consider further support for other countries to deploy. We hope our partners will also consider similar such backing.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, and thank him for the sobering briefing. We also welcome the statement made by the representative of Sómalia.

Clearly, the situation in Somalia is not getting any better. It is still characterized by a grave humanitarian crisis, major political divisions, including within the Transitional Federal Government, and general insecurity in the country. We have been told that some 200,000 people have fled their homes recently as a result of increasing fighting, with the country being plunged into an unfolding disaster. The humanitarian situation remains fragile precisely because of insecurity and political divisions.

We acknowledge the necessity of humanitarian assistance so as to alleviate the suffering of the people

of Somalia. However, as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs warned in his briefing earlier this month, "a robust humanitarian response cannot make up for the absence of desperately needed political and security progress" (*S/PV.5792, p. 6*). It is important that we continue to promote an inclusive political process and reconciliation in Somalia and seriously look into a contingency plan for possible deployment of a peacekeeping force in Somalia.

Despite the often-cited admirable work that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been doing, we all know that this has gone beyond sustainability and effectiveness. The problem is not just that of resources, but also the nature of the mandate. AMISOM was deployed as a stop-gap until the United Nations can deploy.

Once again South Africa expresses the hope that the Security Council will revisit the request of the African Union for an expedited deployment to Somalia. Unfortunately, there seems to be a subtle reluctance, if not resistance, to this request. The reality is that the international community has the responsibility not to abandon the people of Somali again. The way forward, it seems to us, if we are to stop Somalia from being a constant threat to international peace and security, is to encourage and support the political process as well as to deploy a peacekeeping operation. A conducive security environment has to be created to allow the political process to proceed. We hope that the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations will accelerate the deployment of an assessment mission to Somalia so as to facilitate further United Nations engagement.

Given the seriousness of the situation, maintaining the status quo and withdrawal are not options. There can be only one option — a more focused United Nations approach to bring about security in Somalia.

Mr. Kleib (Indonesia): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in welcoming the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Ould Abdallah, and thanking him for his update on the situation in Somalia. We also thank the representative of Somalia for his statement. My delegation appreciates this opportunity to receive an in-depth update about Somalia, given that the Council must contribute to managing and resolving the 17-year-old conflict in that country — not only due to increasing humanitarian suffering but also because of the Council's responsibilities under the Charter to address threats to international peace and security.

We welcome Mr. Ould Abdallah's efforts to promote dialogue, consultations and reconciliation in the country, as well as his leading role in fostering greater unity of action by the international community. We urge him to continue with his commendable efforts for greater international awareness of the Somali issue. We note the idea of a new agenda for peace and stability in Somalia and wish to be continually updated on the development of a harmonized approach among all partners under the leadership of the United Nations.

We welcome the appointment of Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein as the new Prime Minister of Somalia. We believe that the continued divisions in Somalia, both within the transitional federal institutions and between the Transitional Federal Government and the opposition, are the main obstacles to any possible progress on the political front. It is therefore crucial that Mr. Hussein's Government strengthen all-inclusive dialogue and consultations with all Somali stakeholders, with a view to achieving unity of purpose and political direction.

Indonesia supports the two-track approach of a political track and a security or peacekeeping track as the main thrust of the Security Council's efforts. On the political track, we are of the view that the primary task for Somalis should be the completion of the tasks set in the Transitional Federal Charter. In particular, efforts should be focused on the constitutional process, preparation for the national population census and the holding of the elections scheduled for 2009. We look to the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) to support this effort and to play a leading role in channelling and coordinating all international assistance for Somalia.

On the peacekeeping track, Indonesia favours the deployment of a United Nations multidimensional peacekeeping force. At the moment, when United Nations deployment is still under thorough assessment and consideration, a greater technical, logistical and financial support for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is absolutely essential and urgently needed. We commend Ugandan troops on the ground for their efforts and wish to express our appreciation to Member States that have provided naval protection for shipments of humanitarian aid

against piracy and armed robbery along the coast of Somalia. We believe that a United Nations force should in time be deployed to Somalia, and we encourage the Security Council and the Secretary-General to continue to work on contingency planning.

Indonesia is in favour of the Secretary-General's intention, as stated in his report (S/2007/658), to elaborate a two-track approach for Somalia. A strengthened UNPOS should be able to support such an approach. Contingency planning for a possible United Nations peacekeeping component will need to be developed in coordination with and with the support of UNPOS and in keeping with the overall political track. Moreover, the establishment in the Secretariat of an interdepartmental and inter-agency integrated task force on Somalia is welcomed, in particular to develop a coherent peacebuilding strategy for Somalia.

The continued presence of foreign troops in Somalia has been reflected in part in the hardening stance of the opposition and the intensification of the insurgency, making any resolution even more difficult. The international community therefore must contribute to a conducive situation for the withdrawal of all foreign forces that are not part of AMISOM.

Finally, we call on all parties to respect international humanitarian law. It is unacceptable that innocent civilians continue to become the victims of this protracted conflict. We appeal once again to all those with weapons, whether Government, insurgent, or Ethiopian troops, to cease indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks affecting civilians. Ultimately, Somalia needs a political and security resolution, but in the meantime, humanitarian assistance and access must be enhanced. We call on the international community to increase their assistance to Somalia, including to the consolidated appeal for Somalia, and we call on the Somali authorities to facilitate and widen access for humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We too are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his timely briefing and complete recommendations for action by the international community in Somalia to achieve a long-lasting solution to this protracted conflict.

We are concerned about the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Somalia, especially in Mogadishu, and the increasing suffering of civilians caught in the fight between the insurgents and Government forces. We believe the international community must do everything possible to ease their suffering and to provide humanitarian assistance to all those in need. The need for an international response is urgent, and all parties in Somalia must do whatever they can to ensure secure access to international humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, all parties in Somalia should be reminded that the key priority is the protection of civilians and that the abuse of international humanitarian law and human rights law is totally unacceptable. We deplore the abductions and killings of independent journalists and human rights activists in Somalia over the last year. We hope that the French journalist who was abducted just last weekend in Puntland will be freed as soon as possible.

We are also worried about reported restrictions placed by the Transitional Federal Government on the independent media, which have been reporting on the unfolding situation in the country. At the same time, we believe the humanitarian disaster in Somalia can be avoided only through national reconciliation and stabilization in the country. Slovakia believes that the National Reconciliation Congress held in Somalia earlier this year was an encouraging step in the political process, and we hope that its outcomes will be implemented expeditiously.

We welcome the recent appointment of the new Government of Somalia under the leadership of Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein. We share the view of Special Representative Ould Abdallah that the President and Prime Minister need to be more active in addressing the crisis through political dialogue involving all parties, including opposition and independent personalities, in deciding the future of their country. We hope that the transitional federal institutions will now seize the momentum and move expeditiously to establish inclusive democratic institutions in Somalia, including in the area of preparing for the census and elections due in 2009.

We note the recommendations of Mr. Ould Abdallah on simultaneous actions on the political and security fronts. We hope that the international community, including the United Nations, will play a more instrumental role in assisting Somalia in its efforts to achieve peace, stability and prosperity.

Finally, we would like to reiterate the necessity of addressing the ongoing arms embargo violations that

contribute to increasing tensions and hostilities between the parties, and we call on all States — in particular those in the region — to fully comply with the arms embargo and prevent any actions and activities by non-State actors to supply arms into Somalia.

In conclusion, we would like to commend the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for the positive role it continues to play in Somalia, since there are very few options other than more support for AMISOM at the moment. We therefore look forward to the deployment of Burundian troops, which we hope will contribute to improving the security situation on the ground. Finally, we support the call of Mr. Ould Abdallah to strengthen the operational capacities and capabilities of AMISOM.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): The situation in Somalia is grave. It poses a real threat to peace and security in the Horn of Africa and is causing terrible suffering among the Somali population. The situation requires an integrated approach on the part of the international community to address all the various aspects of the crisis. In that context, I thank Special Representative Mr. Ould Abdallah for his detailed report on the latest developments in that country and for his recommendations for strengthening the action of the international community. I also thank the representative of Somalia for his contribution to the debate.

At the political level, the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein, has opened a new window of opportunity for progress in the transition process. We encourage the Prime Minister to invite all political forces, inside Somalia or out, that renounce violence and accept the Transitional Federal Charter as the framework for the restoration of peace in Somalia to participate in an inclusive political process. The Transitional Federal Government is primarily responsible for implementing the conclusions of the National Reconciliation Congress and for establishing a road map for completing the transitional period. That includes preparations for a constitutional referendum and for elections by 2009, in accordance with the Transitional Federal Charter.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, as the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Holmes, recently reminded the Council. There is no indication that this trend will reverse itself. The urgency of the crisis has even prompted dozens of non-governmental organizations to appeal to the international community. A growing portion of the population is dependent on assistance, which, however, is facing serious problems of access. All parties, and the Transitional Federal Institutions in particular, are duty-bound to protect the population, respect international humanitarian law, facilitate access to those in need, and promote the return of displaced persons to their areas of origin.

Incidents similar to that of 4 December, when the closure of land and maritime access points to humanitarian assistance was announced and subsequently retracted, must absolutely be avoided. We must also find a speedy solution, together with the Somali authorities, to the thorny problem of people being made to pay for the right to cross checkpoints. We expect the new Prime Minister to reaffirm his Government's commitment to the facilitation of humanitarian assistance and to do all in his power to end impunity in the country.

The essential prerequisite for lasting improvement, however, remains the stabilization of security. All parties are duty-bound to put an immediate end to acts of violence and to implement a ceasefire that will allow the launching of a genuine political process. Belgium endorses the Secretary-General's analysis that the dispatch of a peacekeeping force cannot be envisaged in the current circumstances. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) remains the sole available option for facilitating the withdrawal of foreign forces from that country. Belgium expresses its support for AMISOM and for the countries that contribute to it. We reiterate the need to strengthen AMISOM, particularly in financial terms, and encourage the United Nations, in cooperation with the African Union, to consider new forms of support for that force, be it in technical assistance or the design of operations, and to implement them post-haste. Belgium is also committed to that approach.

We are well aware that the United Nations has a responsibility to protect with respect to the people of Somalia and has to maintain its credibility in the eyes of international public opinion. Belgium therefore fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and Mr. Ould Abdallah to increase the coordination of international activities in Somalia by developing a comprehensive plan of action, in particular in support of the transition process and the security sector in

Somalia. We especially support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the United Nations Political Office for Somalia be strengthened. We are also willing to listen to those who propose feasible and appropriate solutions to halting the cycle of violence and to stemming the crisis in Somalia, convinced that the international community must pursue and increase its commitment to that course.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): My delegation thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ahmedou Ould Abdallah for his update, as well as for his efforts towards resolving the Somali crisis.

Ghana is concerned that the continuing political stalemate characterized by differences within the Transitional Federal Institutions and divisions between the Government and opposition forces, coupled with the escalation of the insurgency in Somalia, has delayed the adoption of a road map for the implementation of crucial benchmarks in the Transitional Federal Charter.

My delegation calls on the parties in Somalia, both Government and opposition, to respect the outcome of the National Reconciliation Congress held in Mogadishu and to endeavour to work together in good faith to implement its outcomes, including the urgent need to disarm, complete the constitutional process, and conduct free and fair elections by the end of the five-year transitional period. To that end, we call on the opposition parties that boycotted the reconciliation Congress to come on board. The Transitional Federal Government should equally reach out to the opposition for the sake of the unity and peace of the people of Somalia and their country's territorial integrity.

In keeping with the understanding reached at the conference of key international donors held in Stockholm in September 2007, Ghana would wish to stress the desirability of adopting a coordinated and harmonized approach to providing support and assistance in addressing the volatile political and security crisis and the attendant socio-economic conditions and humanitarian catastrophe in Somalia.

We condemn the attacks on the Ugandan contingents of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and commend them for their sacrifices. My delegation reiterates its appeal to the international community to support AMISOM with the necessary financial and logistical resources to facilitate the deployment of pledged contingents. We share the observation of the Secretary-General that a strengthened AMISOM will expedite the withdrawal of foreign forces. Nonetheless, the Security Council and the Secretariat should continue to accord priority attention to the question of developing a contingency plan for the deployment of a robust United Nations peacekeeping force to replace AMISOM, given the scale and magnitude of the security challenges confronting Somalia now.

We commend the humanitarian work of the United Nations and other international humanitarian agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental alike, for their valuable services in helping the displaced and other victims of the dire humanitarian crisis in Somalia. We urge all parties to facilitate access through humanitarian corridors and to respect the rules of international humanitarian law.

We condemn the catalogue of human rights abuses and urge the Transitional Federal Government openly to condemn such abuses to demonstrate its commitment to the rule of law. Finally, we welcome the re-establishment of the Monitoring Group, which helps to check violations of the arms embargo, and urge all States to continue to cooperate with the Group towards the attainment of its desired objectives.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I should also like to thank the representative of Somalia for his statement. I would like to reiterate to Mr. Ould Abdallah that he has the full support of France in carrying out his difficult task.

We welcome in particular that Mr. Ould Abdallah has made proposals to the Security Council for an integrated strategy. We believe that the Somali crisis is an overarching crisis — a political, security and, of course, humanitarian crisis. And as Mr. Ould Abdallah has pointed out, the crisis poses a threat to the security of the entire region. My delegation would like to emphasize what we believe to be three areas for action that must be addressed simultaneously.

The first is the humanitarian situation. There is today an urgent need to respond to the humanitarian tragedy in Somalia. As described to us by Mr. Ould Abdallah, and as Mr. Holmes pointed out 10 days ago (see S/PV.5792), the situation is continuing to deteriorate. More than 600,000 people fled their homes

in 2007, and at least half of the inhabitants of Mogadishu have left the city for shelter in improvised camps along the roads. Fighting in the capital continues. Attacks and killings by insurgents are sometimes answered with artillery fire by Ethiopian forces and forces of the Transitional Federal Government. We recall that the Transitional Federal Government has a responsibility to protect the civilian population and that all combatants must respect humanitarian law.

France hopes that humanitarian aid will be increased, that access to people in need will be guaranteed and that working conditions for humanitarian staff will improve. That goes also for other international personnel working in Somalia. In that regard, I am thinking in particular of journalists and, especially today, of our fellow citizen Mr. Gwen Le Gouil, who was kidnapped on Sunday in the Puntland region. France demands his immediate release.

France is continuing to provide military protection for vessels of the World Food Programme, which is providing essential food aid for Somalis. Two rotations have already taken place, with a third rotation under way. France's commitment will continue until 16 January. These operations have made it possible to significantly improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We are in contact with several of our partners to ensure that these operations can continue beyond 16 January.

Secondly, France has, however, not lost sight of the fact that the crisis will not be resolved without political dialogue. Once he has established his new governing team, the first task of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein, will be to launch a dialogue between the Transitional Federal Government and the opposition in Somalia and elsewhere. That dialogue must be as inclusive as possible and include those who have taken up arms, with the exception, of course, of some extremists with an international agenda. The Security Council must lend its unreserved support for Mr. Ould Abdallah's efforts to bring on board all parties to the conflict. After 16 years of chaos and conflict, France supports in particular the idea of bringing together small groups of decision makers to address specific issues in order to establish an environment conducive to a genuine political process.

The third area is security. The question is how best to respond given the situation that I have outlined. Mr. Ould Abdallah has referred to an ad hoc force to supplement the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The idea of such a force under a United Nations mandate deserves to be considered. There are also other options that could be envisaged. Whatever the case, the situation is such that, in our view, the Security Council cannot rule out any option, whether it be to provide support for AMISOM or to consider mandating an ad hoc force or a possible peacekeeping force. We therefore ask that the Secretariat address all those options, including the speedy deployment of a technical assessment mission, and provide regular updates to the Council on its work.

For the short term, my delegation notes that all credible scenarios call for greater political dialogue and the speedy deployment of AMISOM. France pays tribute to the African Union and to the Ugandan contingent on the ground. We have participated actively in the training of the Burundian contingent. We welcome the announcement made Friday by the Special Envoy of the African Union that the first Burundian battalion would be deployed very soon, namely, in the second half of December.

In the light of what I have said, it will come as no surprise that France supports the idea that there is a need to change course. Given the humanitarian catastrophe taking place before our very eyes, complete disengagement by the international community is clearly out of the question. Nor is the status quo an option.

I would like to thank Mr. Ould Abdallah for the suggestions he made this morning. We hope that the Security Council will be able to quickly consider those options by working together substantively with all the relevant services of the Secretariat.

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me to thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the representative of Somalia for their statements. They have once again depicted one of the direst situations we face. Unfortunately, seemingly unlike other organs of the United Nations, the Security Council appears unable to find an effective way to improve this thorny situation.

The Security Council has received many reports in which the humanitarian and human rights situation merited particular attention. They include the briefing presented to the Human Rights Council on 11 December

by Ms. Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the briefing to the Security Council on 6 December 2007 by Mr. John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Ms. Arbour reiterated her concerns with regard to the human rights of Somalis caught in the crossfire of the conflict, especially in Mogadishu. For his part, Mr. Holmes briefed the Council on the terrible humanitarian situation in the improvised refugee camps surrounding that city, which house some 600,000 people. According to Mr. Holmes, that may be the largest group of internally displaced persons in the world today.

In addition, recent political events serve to highlight the deterioration of the Transitional Federal Institutions. The endemic and progressive fragmentation of Somali politics should spur the international community and the people of Somalia themselves to show greater support. In the short and medium terms, there is a risk that the new Government of Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein will collapse, and along with it our efforts to stabilize Somalia.

Reports indicate that the international community and relief organizations have made significant progress in humanitarian coverage, but that a great deal remains to be done. As a matter of priority, the Government and the opposition must both address the critical political situation and undertake specific measures to ensure the implementation of the outcome of the National Reconciliation Congress.

On a more strategic level, the Security Council can no longer sit back with arms folded. The mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) will again expire in February 2008, and the Council has yet to find a way to strengthen or replace that operation. In the coming weeks we must therefore take fundamental decisions with regard to that operation and the possible alternatives to replace it: either the deployment of a multinational force or the dispatch of a peacekeeping force. As a prelude to whatever decision is taken, it will be necessary to dispatch a technical assessment mission.

Finally, the Government must have zero tolerance with soldiers and civilians leading illegal groups throughout the length and breadth of the region. It must reduce excessive border controls, prevent the harassment of relief workers and dedicate greater resources to dealing with piracy.

Our lack of action could jeopardize the credibility of this Council. Consequently, it is crucial that we act energetically and rapidly, given these challenges.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We, too, are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, for his detailed briefing and to the Permanent Representative of Somalia for his evaluation.

The Russian Federation is seriously concerned by the development of the situation in Somalia, particularly in the area of security and also in the humanitarian sphere. Despite the efforts of the Transitional Federal Government and the Ethiopian troops and the Uganda contingent of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) supporting it, the situation in the country remains extremely serious. We welcome the appointment of Nur Hassan Hussein as Prime Minister of Somalia. This is a very important step. We now need to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Government so as to have effective solutions to the cumulative complex problems facing Somalia. Responsibility for overcoming the lengthy crisis lies with the Somalis themselves. All parties, including, of course, the Transitional Federal Government, must take decisive steps for a speedy normalization of the situation and to assist the peacebuilding process and to strengthen State institutions.

Real progress in ensuring a broad political dialogue and the implementation of a comprehensive process of national reconciliation will create conditions for preventing a further slide of the country into a humanitarian disaster. There is still a threat of the conflict in Somalia growing into a regional one. Such a scenario is likely to destabilize an already complex situation in the Horn of Africa. In these conditions, we feel it is extremely important to continue to observe strictly the regime of the arms embargo against Somalia. Neighbouring countries can and must play a constructive role in assisting and promoting a settlement, and above all, as regards normalization of the situation in the area of security.

In such conditions, of course, maintaining the status quo in the area of security in Somalia is unacceptable, and here we agree absolutely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We support the activities of AMISOM, and we are

convinced that a full deployment of the Mission will greatly help to create conditions for effective progress in the process of national reconciliation. We note the plans for a further strengthening of AMISOM that are being worked on at this time, and we hope that they will be implemented appropriately.

We also agree that it is essential to continue work on the modalities and the preliminary planning for a possible United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia. However, it is clear that, in the present circumstances, the prospect of transforming AMISOM into a United Nations peacekeeping operation still depends directly on a substantial improvement in the area of security and on achieving serious progress in a political settlement.

We have taken note of the recommendation by the Secretary-General, confirmed today by his Special Representative, on sending a multinational force to Somalia. This idea deserves careful work with the involvement of all interested sides, including, of course, Somalia.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, for the information given to us concerning the grave situation in Somalia. We commend the United Nations Political Office for Somalia for its work, along with the United Nations team working on the development of a comprehensive peacebuilding strategy for Somalia. We encourage further efforts in this direction in order to find a solution to the protracted crisis besetting the country.

We have taken note of all of the efforts that have been deployed by the Transitional Federal Government aimed at implementing the transitional political process and national reconciliation. Taking account of the situation in the field and the difficult security and humanitarian situation in Somalia, I would like to outline a number of points concerning the political dialogue process, the humanitarian situation and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

In spite of its weaknesses, the convening of a national reconciliation congress is an important milestone in the process of national reconciliation. In this regard, it is crucial that dialogue between the parties continue, including the opposition groups, both within and outside of the country. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Transitional Federal Government should show the political will and must adopt a stance of openness when dealing with the opposition groups. In turn, the Government must also implement the recommendations adopted by the Congress, including the development of a road map, in order to accomplish those tasks that are enshrined in the Transitional Federal Charter, in particular the constitutional process, as well as the preparations for the national census, the elections to be held in 2009 and the implementation of the national security plan and the national stabilization plan. On the other hand, the opposition groups must renounce violence and must agree to the Transitional Federal Charter in order to create the necessary conditions for reconciliation. All parties must understand that it is only through an inclusive dialogue and through a genuine political process that a sustainable peace will be achieved.

Considering the humanitarian situation, we are disturbed to hear about the lack of security and how this has increased the vulnerability of the population. The humanitarian situation has worsened, given the rise in violence. Access to humanitarian assistance is limited; it has been impeded because of the increasing lack of security, because of the roadblocks that have been created that block access to overland consignments of the World Food Programme (WFP), and pirate activities on the coast of Somalia that are preventing aid and assistance from reaching areas that require it.

According to the last report of the Secretary-General, there are currently in Somalia some 750,000 internally displaced persons, of which 350,000 have only recently become displaced. In the light of this dramatic situation, we must urge all parties to guarantee strict compliance with the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights. Moreover, the situation must be tackled, as the humanitarian crisis persists and the ongoing violence could dissipate all political efforts. To that end, we welcome the fact that the planning of a unified appeal for 2008 has begun, and we welcome the pledges for contributions that have been received.

With regard to AMISOM and its financing — and these are my concluding comments — we commend AMISOM's troops for their professionalism in fulfilling their duties, working in a highly difficult and risky environment. We agree with the report of the Under-Secretary-General concerning the need to maintain AMISOM, to ensure that it remains operative,

and to strengthen its capacities through new deployments of troops in order to provide more effective and urgent assistance for the stabilization of the country.

Ms. Wolcott (United States of America): We thank United Nations Special Representative Ould Abdallah for his briefing this morning.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Nur Hassan Hussein as the new Prime Minister of the Transitional Federal Government. We hope that that Government can now focus on renewing its efforts towards inclusive political dialogue and resuming the comprehensive political process outlined by the Transitional Federal Government Charter.

We hope Prime Minister Hussein will draw on his humanitarian background to address the needs of Somalia's nearly one million displaced persons, and in working to alleviate current impediments to effective delivery of United States and other international humanitarian aid.

We urge the Transitional Federal Government to move quickly to facilitate the drafting of a new Constitution and formation of key commissions, such as a national electoral commission, that will allow national elections to take place on schedule in 2009. We also continue to call on Somali stakeholders across the political spectrum to rejoin the political dialogue process and to discuss key elements of the transitional political process leading towards national elections in 2009.

In fiscal year 2007, the United States was the largest bilateral donor of humanitarian assistance to Somalia, with approximately $90 million in such aid provided, in addition to $25 million in development and democracy assistance. And we continue to be the largest bilateral donor in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), with nearly $59.6 million provided to date in support of that effort.

We call on all Somali and regional actors to prevent extremist elements from using Somalia as a safe haven for continued attacks against civilians, the Transitional Federal Government and AMISOM. The United States has repeatedly urged the leadership of the Transitional Federal Government to reach out to key stakeholders, particularly in Mogadishu, to resume the transitional political process and work towards an effective ceasefire arrangement as the best means of isolating extremist elements seeking to prevent further political dialogue.

The United States commends AMISOM, in particular the Ugandan forces, for their efforts in Somalia, operating under difficult and dangerous circumstances. We welcome the commitment by Burundi, Ghana and Nigeria to deploy forces in support of AMISOM. We urge all members of the African Union (AU) that have pledged to send troops to Somalia to do so without delay, and we urge the international community to assist the AU with the necessary logistical and financial resources, so that AMISOM may be fully deployed. We continue to support the full and timely deployment of AMISOM as a critical component in restoring stability and creating the space for continued dialogue and reconciliation.

The United States would like once again to stress the need for contingency planning for a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia. We ask that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations send a technical assessment mission to Somalia as soon as conditions allow. As we all know, the dynamics in Somalia are fluid and can change at any time. We must begin the contingency planning now, so that the United Nations will be prepared to deploy if and when conditions on the ground permit.

The United States remains concerned about the increase in piracy off the coast of Somalia. We commend our partners in the Combined Task Force 150 that continue to patrol the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean to ensure the safe passage of merchant ships, especially ships carrying humanitarian cargo. The United States supports the 5 July letter from Mr. Efthimios Mitropoulos, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the need for a new Security Council resolution to address the problem of piracy off the coast of Somalia. The United States looks forward to working with other members of the Council on this issue next year.

Finally, the United States is gravely concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, particularly in south-central Somalia. We will continue monitoring the humanitarian situation, and we welcome continued close coordination and cooperation with the United Nations country team and our donor partners in Nairobi to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those most in need within Somalia.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I wish to welcome Mr. Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. I thank him for his briefing and urge him to continue the efforts he has undertaken since he took office to promote a comprehensive political process in Somalia in accordance with Security Council resolution 1772 (2007).

It is unfortunate that, as the Secretary-General stated in his most recent report to the Security Council under this item (S/2007/658), the security situation in Somalia is making it difficult to deploy United Nations peacekeepers. However, we welcome the Secretary-General's recent statement that, despite that situation, work is under way to develop a strategic assessment for a United Nations intervention in Somalia in order to provide an integrated approach and a framework for United Nations peacebuilding efforts in that country. In addition, the Organization can play a greater role in mobilizing and providing support for the efforts of the African Union (AU) to strengthen the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), including completion of the deployment of Burundian troops this month.

We agree that ensuring stability in Somalia requires parallel efforts on the political and security tracks. We have always called for a national dialogue in Somalia based on the principles of reconciliation and inclusion, rather than on those of force and exclusion. Therefore, we commend Mr. Ould Abdallah's efforts to move national reconciliation forward, thus creating the basic conditions needed for the country's continued progress towards stability and democracy. That can be achieved only through an end to the violence, the withdrawal of foreign troops and the building of constitutional democratic institutions.

At this juncture, it is essential that Somalia continue to broaden the political reconciliation process, which must include all tribes and factions. In addition to continuing that approach, the Government must draft a constitution for the country, develop a road map for the remainder of the transitional period and pave the way for conducting a census and elections by the end of the period.

It goes without saying that the disputes in Somalia, whether within the institutions of the Transitional Federal Government or between the Government and the opposition, must be settled through dialogue. Moreover, all parties in the country must refrain from using violence as a way to express political positions. They must also stop jeopardizing the safety of civilians, impeding humanitarian access to them and, in particular, targeting humanitarian relief workers, journalists and AMISOM personnel.

Despite the fact that the Government formed by newly appointed Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein was dissolved shortly after its formation, we hope that it will soon be succeeded by a new, broad-based Cabinet that includes various Somali parties and that can communicate well with the opposition. We also hope that it will play an effective role in alleviating the worsening humanitarian situation in the country, particularly since Mr. Hussein has a solid background and experience in that area.

The dire humanitarian situation facing the people of Somalia has been described as the worst in Africa. It is regrettable that that the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Indeed, since the beginning of this year, the number of civilians fleeing the capital because of the continuing violence has risen to approximately 600,000, making the problem of internally displaced persons a serious crisis. Furthermore, the social and health statistics for women and children in Somalia are among the worst in the world. Briefing the Council after his recent visit to Somalia (see S/PV.5792), the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs explained that international humanitarian agencies face great difficulties in carrying out their tasks because of the continuing violence, and that the international response has been inadequate. Therefore, the flow of international aid to Somalia must continue, together with cooperation and coordination between international and regional parties and the Transitional Federal Government in order to guarantee humanitarian access to those most in need.

The question that arises here is why the international response to the humanitarian situation in Somalia has been different from the response to that in Darfur. Are the two situations not the same? Are innocent civilians not suffering as a result of both conflicts? In addition to the extremely grave humanitarian situation being experienced by the Somali people, their human rights are being violated, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated on 11 December in her statement to the Human Rights Council. We deplore the serious violations that are taking place, including the targeting

of civilians, as well as the indifference shown by rebels, troops of the Transitional Government and Ethiopian troops towards civilian population centres. Just in recent days, scores of people have been killed or injured by artillery shells that targeted their homes and shelters in Mogadishu. This situation should not be tolerated.

Moreover, the issue of the ever-worsening piracy that has been taking place for almost a year now and that has not spared even ships carrying humanitarian aid must be addressed. Therefore, initiatives taken recently by the French navy to escort humanitarian assistance vessels are praiseworthy.

Finally, I would like to point out that the mandate of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia expires at the end of this month. Everyone agrees on the need for its continued existence. Therefore we would like to stress that the role of the Office in supporting the participatory political process and achieving national reconciliation is important and must be strengthened.

Mr. Okio (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to welcome Mr. Ould Abdallah, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and to salute his efforts in the country in a particularly difficult context. I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Somalia for his contribution to the debate.

As regards the latest developments in Somalia, the least that can be said is that the situation remains serious. All the main elements noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/658) remain current, both with respect to the security and political situation and as regards, of course, the peace process. In this context, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The number of displaced persons is reaching record numbers, and the number of people needing humanitarian assistance is constantly growing. All these figures give us the scale of the disaster.

At the same time, the Monitoring Group on Somalia notes continuing violations of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 751 (1992). These weapons, which come from countries in the region, continue to arrive in Mogadishu and to supply the extremist groups. Moreover, acts of piracy are continuing. In that connection, we would like to welcome once again the very courageous initiative taken by France that has made it possible to improve the shipment of humanitarian assistance. We regret that it has not raised the expected support. Since it will be concluding soon, pirates will have fine days ahead, unless new initiatives are planned.

If I could compare Somalia to a sick person, I would say that the deterioration in its state of health requires not just shock treatment, but also the involvement of several specialists. Neither the States of the subregion nor the African Union, through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), can stem this illness alone. That is why my delegation repeats its appeal for a ceasefire and for national reconciliation in the context of an inter-Somali political dialogue, without which no progress can be achieved.

With respect to supporting the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a multinational force, we would like to recall that overlapping sociological, historical and other factors among the Somali people and those of other countries in the subregion should lead us to taking increasingly into account regional aspects of the Somali crisis, not only in regard to approaches to a solution and but also to foreseeable consequences if a political solution is not found.

In the immediate future, we feel that the Council should support the new Government and the Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein, and invite his Government to continue its efforts toward national reconciliation by relying upon the progress made by the National Reconciliation Congress held from 15 July to 30 August 2007. If the Congress decisions referred to by the Secretary-General in paragraph 5 of his report could be implemented, then a big step could be taken towards stabilization of the situation in this country.

In our view, the Security Council should also ensure that the United Nations Political Office for Somalia is strengthened so that it can play a leading role in coordinating efforts made by parties, supporting the efforts of AMISOM, seriously envisaging the deployment of a multinational force, taking appropriate measures to contain acts of piracy, considering the establishment of an investigation commission with a view to holding accountable the serious violators of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. President, my delegation knows how much your country supports initiatives for a return of peace in Somalia. We have counted on your continued support to help this country.

Congo, in conclusion, condemns the kidnapping of the French journalist and calls for his immediate release.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of Italy.

I wish first to warmly welcome Special Representative Ould Abdallah and to thank him for a most focused presentation with an operational approach. That is precisely what we need. I am glad that we have been able to have this debate in December, under the Italian presidency, given that Somalia is a strong priority for Italy. I am also glad that the public format has allowed the whole membership to follow the meeting.

First of all, the scale of human suffering in Somalia has become unacceptable. Effectively addressing the humanitarian emergency dimension of the Somali crisis has to be at the top of our agenda. The words used by Under-Secretary-General Holmes a few days ago still echo in this Chamber "increasingly terrible things are now happening in Mogadishu, as it descends into the nightmare of urban guerrilla warfare and reciprocal atrocities" (*S/PV.5792, p. 6*).

I wish to acknowledge the great work being accomplished by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the non-governmental organizations active in Somalia and the humanitarian community in general to alleviate this human suffering. But I also concur with the Special Representative that without a consistent and strong multidimensional strategy encompassing the political, security and human rights dimension, the humanitarian response alone cannot solve the crisis.

Secondly, the situation in Somalia is indeed a very serious threat to international peace and security, which requires an appropriate response by this Council. Like many others before me, I fully agree with the Special Representative's assessment of the need to radically change our agenda for Somalia and step up our efforts. "Business as usual", as has been said, is not an option any more. I am glad to see a strong awareness of this fact among Council members. Now we have to translate this awareness into a coherent, multidimensional strategy and draw the necessary operational conclusions.

Our paramount goal should remain, more than ever, the active promotion — at the appropriate time and under the right conditions — of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia. We note that today's discussion has indicated that that is indeed the view of many, if not all, Council members. A first step in that direction was the technical meeting organized by the United Kingdom in early December. We hope that this dialogue with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) could be accelerated so that concrete options within the contingency plan could be presented to the Council soon. Let us remember that the contingency plan was last requested in August in resolution 1772 (2007). That is already four months ago.

In particular, it is necessary — and this has been said very clearly by other members who have spoken before me — that the technical assessment mission that was also requested in paragraph 16 of resolution 1772 (2007) be dispatched to the region as soon as possible and, I would add, without delay. Keeping the United Nations option alive will also encourage African troop-contributing countries to participate in the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISON), whose strengthening remains our first objective in the short term, as has been stated this morning by all members. This is the first priority: to strengthen AMISON, because what is at stake is the credibility of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations.

Italy has provided €10 million to AMISON and invited other donors to contribute. I wish to underline, however, that our support of AMISON should not prevent us from actively pursuing all other options and, in particular, from responding to the African Union request that was very strongly expressed here by the representative of Congo for a United Nations rehatting as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the Special Representative has heard this morning that there is wide support for his role, which is indeed a very challenging one. His commitment and proposal for a re-energized agenda and political process for Somalia are most welcome, and he has our strong and fullest support. I wish to add the full support of my Government to that which has already been expressed by others. I trust that the Special Representative's action in the region and his position vis-à-vis all interlocutors will be strengthened following this debate.

We also need to strengthen the United Nations political office in Mogadishu and provide a special representative with the necessary means to carry on its

initiatives and to push the political process forward. I also hope that the Council may soon express itself on Somalia by means of a presidential statement, and I look forward to receiving the proposal that the United Kingdom will circulate in this regard. I would like to express deep appreciation to the United Kingdom for its efforts.

Somalia is a textbook case on the credibility of this Organization and its ability to make a difference on the ground. We cannot continue to pay lip service to doing more for Somalia and then do nothing.

We need concrete — I repeat, concrete — steps forward, and we need to move from goodwill to action now.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Salgueiro (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

I will base my statement on the conclusions drawn from the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the European Union held on 10 December of this year.

The EU is deeply concerned with the situation in Somalia. We believe that it poses a significant threat to peace and security in the Horn of Africa and beyond. It also causes immense suffering to the people of Somalia. The EU therefore calls for urgent efforts by all parties towards an inclusive political process and reiterates its commitment to a comprehensive approach to the Somali crisis, covering the political, security and humanitarian facets.

The European Union welcomes the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein, and encourages him to invite all political forces, inside and outside Somalia, that renounce violence and accept the Transitional Federal Charter as the framework for restoring peace and stability in the country, to an inclusive political process.

The EU is willing to consider a significant contribution for the transitional period, on the basis of a mutual understanding between the EU and the Transitional Federal Government on progress to be made in the political process. Indeed, the Transitional Federal Institutions have the primary responsibility to implement the outcome of the National Reconciliation Congress, as endorsed by the Transitional Federal Parliament, and to establish a road map for actions until the end of the transitional period. This includes the preparation for a constitutional referendum and elections by 2009 as set out in the Transitional Federal Charter.

The European Union condemns all acts of violence and calls on all parties to cease hostilities and engage in a ceasefire, confidence-building and security arrangements in the search for sustainable peace. The EU urges the Transitional Federal Institutions, Ethiopia and all other actors in Somalia to ensure humanitarian access, to respect human rights and international humanitarian law, to protect the civilian population and to facilitate the secure and early return of displaced persons to Mogadishu and other areas of origin.

The European Community Humanitarian Aid Department has provided some €18 million to Somalia this year, plus support to refugees in Kenya and Yemen. The EU remains committed to enhancing humanitarian assistance, provided there is unimpeded humanitarian access and respect for the integrity of humanitarian assistance.

Peace cannot be built on impunity. The EU therefore calls on the Transitional Federal Government to investigate all human rights abuses committed in Somalia and bring those responsible to justice. In this regard, we encourage the United Nations to use all available instruments to improve monitoring of the human rights situation in the country.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is at present the only available option to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign and regional forces from Somalia. The European Union expresses its support for AMISOM, particularly recognizing the contribution that Uganda has made, and reiterates the need to strengthen AMISOM, including through identifying substantial new financial support. The European Commission, through the African Peace Facility and the Instrument for Stability is channelling €15 million for direct financing of AMISOM and €5 million for African Union planning capacities for that Mission. Some EU member States have also provided

financial contributions for AMISOM. The EU is committed to make further contributions to the African Union, on the basis of a comprehensive political and needs assessment, as well as to provide bilateral contributions to African Union member States deploying to AMISOM, and we call on other donors to contribute as well.

The EU also encourages the United Nations to provide more support to AMISOM in accordance with resolution 1772 (2007) of the Security Council and to move forward with contingency planning for a possible peacekeeping operation in Somalia.

The European Union expresses its full support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Abdallah, and to his leadership role in coordinating efforts of the international community. His readiness to draw up an international action plan, and in particular to frame international support to the transitional process and establish a strategic framework for security sector support to Somalia, has been greatly appreciated. The EU is ready to support deliberation and implementation of this plan.

The EU recognizes the increasing danger posed by acts of piracy off the Somali coast and will study possible ways to respond to the problem, together with the Somali authorities and the international community. We welcome the French initiative to provide military accompaniment to vessels chartered by the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering aid to Somalia, while stressing the need for international initiatives that can continue to provide protection to the WFP beyond January 2008.

Finally, we believe that a successful European Union delivery and responsiveness in the Somali peace process remains essential to support a comprehensive political solution, which would bring long-term stability to Somalia.

The President: I now give the floor to Ambassador Løvald, Permanent Representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Norway, as co-Chair of the International Contact Group on Somalia, welcomes this opportunity to address the Council on the situation in Somalia, and we thank the Special Representative for his briefing. Let me take this opportunity to emphasize our full support for his efforts to bring about positive change in Somalia.

We are all deeply worried by the present state of affairs in Somalia. The security situation is at best volatile in Mogadishu and in several other areas of the country. The humanitarian crisis has gone from bad to worse, as hundreds of thousands flee the war-affected areas.

We are now at a critical junction for Somalia and for its Transitional Federal Institutions. We welcome the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Nur Hassan Hussein, and trust that he will focus on the humanitarian crisis in the country. He has indicated that this, along with improving security and deepening the reconciliation process, will be the main priorities of his Government. We support that approach. The problems of Somalia are closely interlinked and can only be solved through a comprehensive effort. The international community must be ready to support this effort.

Security and lasting stability can only be achieved through a genuine and broad-based political reconciliation — a reconciliation which includes all Somali political forces that renounce violence and are ready to take part in a political process. In order for the Transitional Federal Institutions to secure support and gain credibility from the Somali people, it is essential that the Government be able to deliver a minimum of basic services. So far, this has hardly been possible, partly due to the insecurity and violence.

We should be more determined in dealing with the humanitarian crisis and the suffering in Somalia. It may be time to consider a compact between the Somali Transitional Federal Institutions, civil society and other institutions and the United Nations and international agencies, to secure service delivery to the Somali people. Such a compact could set out principles, commitments and good practices guidelines for the delivery of necessary services. Transitional Federal Institutions should also reach out to all groups who are ready to renounce violence and to join in such a compact. The Transitional Federal Institutions should also make a firm commitment to stick to their mandate in the Transitional Federal Charter and the scheduled elections in 2009.

It is imperative to improve the security situation, which means there is an urgent need to strengthen or substitute the present African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) force with a more substantial peacebuilding mission. This would also relieve

Ethiopia of its present security burden and make it possible for them to withdraw their troops. Due to the prevailing security situation, the international presence in Mogadishu and surrounding areas is at best negligible, and this, as well as the absence of a functioning Government, is hampering the work of humanitarian agencies.

That is why we believe it is important for the United Nations and international agencies to increase their presence inside Mogadishu. Such a presence is important for service delivery and as a signal to the Somali people that the international community cares.

To sum up, the international community must be ready to act to alleviate the suffering of the Somali people and to contribute to peace. We strongly support the work of the Special Representative, and urge support for the new Prime Minister and his priorities. This is a critical point in time for Somalia, and it is time for all of us to support those who work for peace and stability in the country and in the region.

The President: I now give the floor again to the Special Representative, Mr. Ould Abdallah, in order to comment on this debate.

Mr. Ould Abdallah (*spoke in French*): I will be very brief. I would just like to make the following comments. First, I am very pleased to make my first briefing to the Council in terms of my new mandate under your presidency, Sir, because your country has an expertise, it is involved, and I am working very well with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Rome.

I would also like to say that I wanted to draw the attention of the Council to the need to review the working approach we have on Somalia. I say this out of respect for the Council. If we continue with the working method we have been using for 17 years, not only are we unlikely to achieve anything, but even worse, this institution risks losing its credibility.

It is that motivation that led me to make these new suggestions. If we maintain the status quo, humanitarian assistance, which is useful and essential, will continue to be shipped from Kenya to Somali ports. But there are limits after 17 years. After so many millions and so much energy spent, we can say that we have not been successful. Can we give up? That is morally and ethically difficult, so we need to act differently. In doing so, we need to accompany the Somalis in a political discussion, which is not easy, and we need to encourage them to dialogue. They are competent and serious. They can do this if we act in a consistent and serious manner.

At the same time, we must provide them with a new security, which will not only give them stability, but will also provide jobs and reassurance. Escorting ships on the high seas will produce more security and reassure the population in Mogadishu.

I think that while waiting, my colleagues in the Secretariat should send a field mission. We cannot send it now, however, because of regulations. I have twice been to Mogadishu and Baidoa. Everybody is going to Mogadishu and Baidoa. I am not saying that it is like the Mediterranean and everything is alright. We can go to Somaliland and we can go to Puntland, but it is in Mogadishu where there are problems, in 4 out of the city's 16 neighbourhoods.

We need to make an effort or admit our own powerlessness. It is said that the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is doing work. However, it is more accurate to compliment the Ugandan contingent, as it is the only one there. African public opinion is aware, because of the Internet and radio, that there are none from AMISOM, simply a Ugandan contingent. We must strengthen that contingent and try to find — Council members know how better than I do — a means to do that. Perhaps the neighbouring countries from the Middle East could help pending an additional AMISOM reinforcement.

That is what I wanted to say out of respect for the Council, and particularly as regards its credibility and the credibility of this Organization for which I work.

The President: I thank Special Representative Ould Abdallah for the very clear explanation and very clear message that he has given us.

We have fully understood, you can be sure, Sir, the rationale of your statements. I also hope that you realize that one of the main objectives of this debate was to strengthen your hand in dealing with the crisis. I think that the debate has shown that you have full support and that from now on you can feel that your hand really is strengthened.

I think that your clarification has rightly focused on the need to strengthen AMISOM, which the Council has highlighted. It is a question of the credibility of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations.

Also, I think it has to be clear that we must pay tribute to Uganda, because, as you said, we speak of AMISOM, but in fact that means the battalions of Uganda — to whom all members of the Council are grateful.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.